COMPLIMENTS
—OF—
W. L. GARRISON.

31761 09343741 6

The Nation's Shame

Sonnets

By

William Lloyd Garrison III

Boston, Mass.

Proem.

Since they who hold the "faculty divine,"
Bereft of vision or in abject thrall,
Use not their glorious gift at Freedom's call,
Accept this humbler verse, O country mine!
As in a fearful nightmare, where combine
(A sight to freeze the marrow and appall)
The murderer's dagger and the victim's fall,
The dreamer paralyzed can make no sign,
So in the months of horror that have sped
With agonizing scenes of slaughter rife —
The nation lost in darkness, reason fled,
Unmindful of Oppression's threatening knife —
I, like the tortured dreamer on the bed,
Struggle to lift my warning cry for life.

June 1, 1899.

William McKinley.

Whether as tool or tyrant, History's pen
Upon the nation's scroll of lasting shame
Shall pillory in letters black thy name,
Time can alone adjudge. To living men
With liberty aflame no empty words
Can justify the slaughter of the brave,
Battling for freedom and a freeman's grave,
As fought Armenians 'gainst Turks and Kurds.
How in the future will this record read:
"Here lie the patriots of the Philippines,
Murdered to satisfy a nation's greed
By men whose rebel fathers, on the greens
Of Lexington and Concord, dared to bleed
And die for what to freemen freedom means"?

March 10, 1899.

Aguinaldo.

Thine, AGUINALDO, is the common fate
Of all who seek, in Freedom's holy cause,
Deliverance from foreign yokes and laws,
Against a foe of overwhelming weight.
Thou hast great compeers of an earlier date,
TOUSSAINT, BOZZARIS, KOSCIUSKO, men
Misunderstood, maligned, defeated, then
Immortalized among the brave and great.
Take heart and comfort if thy soul be sad.
Not lost nor wasted thy heroic stand:
Thou hast unmasked a nation falsely clad
In altruistic garb, revealed a land
Blind to distinctions between good and bad,
And smiting Liberty with ruthless hand.

March 19, 1899.

The Church Recreant.

The Easter lilies in their robes of white
Once more the altars of the church adorn,
To typify the resurrection morn
When from the tomb the Christ arose to light.
O Church! thyself entombed in darkest night,
With hollow worship of the man-child born
In Bethlehem's manger, cheerless and forlorn,
When shall thy resurrection greet the sight?
Should the great Nazarene once more appear
This Easter morning and from pious lips
Defence of rapine and of murder hear,—
Pleas for foul deeds that Freedom's light eclipse,—
Straight would his burst of scorn false temples clear,
His words indignant scourge like scorpion whips!

April 2, 1899.

Abased.

Much have I read upon the storied page
Of deadly conflicts on the battle-field,
Whose issue oft the fate of nations sealed;
For War's dread footsteps track with blood each age.
And I have thrilled with horror at the rage
Of brothers who against each other wield
Destructive weapons, keen but not more steeled
Than hearts which in imbittered war engage.
What happiness to feel that our dear land,
Though self-baptized in blood for freedom's sake,
Was safe from wars of conquest, and could stand
A high example for the world to take!
But now our ship of state, in pirate hand,
Incarnadines the water in its wake!

April 8, 1899.

Contrition.

Great Abdul Aziz, whose puissant might
Keeps not alone one empire at thy beck,
But Europe's mightiest monarchs holds in check,
Grant we may find acceptance in thy sight!
Assassin, despot, monster, Nature's blight,—
The millstone names we hung upon thy neck
Repentantly we lift, and now would deck
Thy swarthy brow with garlands snowy white.
The winds of destiny and duty sweep
With forceful impulse through the nation's heart,
Ideals reversing and convictions deep
Uprooting to destroy and rend apart.
Welcome, red slaughter and the flames that leap!
Hail, horrors born of war's relentless art!

April 10, 1899.

Treason.

"Stop thief!" the thief himself, when hotly pressed,
Vociferates with lusty accents loud,
To mystify and turn aside the crowd,
That unobserved he may elude arrest.
So treason is most flagrantly confessed
By men of aspect virtuous and proud,
From whose false lips is loyalty avowed,
And "traitor" shouted to confuse the quest.
Mark well the accusers, though in reverend guise,
In cabinet or press or pulpit found,
Entrenched behind a bulwark made of lies,
They launch anathemas of empty sound.
The loyal heart authority defies
When that, disloyal, passes freedom's bound.

April 29, 1899.

Invocation.

If death be but the open door to light,
The entrance to a kingdom of the soul,
Where eyes from mount of vision may control
The outgrown world with a diviner sight,
O ye, who held the van in freedom's fight,
Reveal to us this troubled nation's goal!
Not more asunder north from southern pole
Than this dark present from your forecast bright.
When the great charter signed by Lincoln's pen
From out the land of bondage brought a race,
How little did ye dream that later men
Would dare this seal of promise to efface!
Has virtue vigor to uprise again,
Or sinks one more republic in disgrace?

April 30, 1899.

Awakening.

"Too far the nation has advanced to turn
On its imperial and predestined way:
Duty and destiny decree its sway
O'er conquered islands where the tropics burn.
Why with abstract ideals the mind concern,
When power and wealth the sacrifice repay?
Expedient counsel should the wise obey,
And grasp with might the things for which they yearn."
So speak Democracy's most deadly foes,
With voices confident and gloating eyes,
Forgetting conscience for a paltry prize
Which holds concealed incalculable woes.
"Triumph not, fools!" Imperilled Freedom's cries
Have roused the people from their drugged repose.

May 31, 1899.